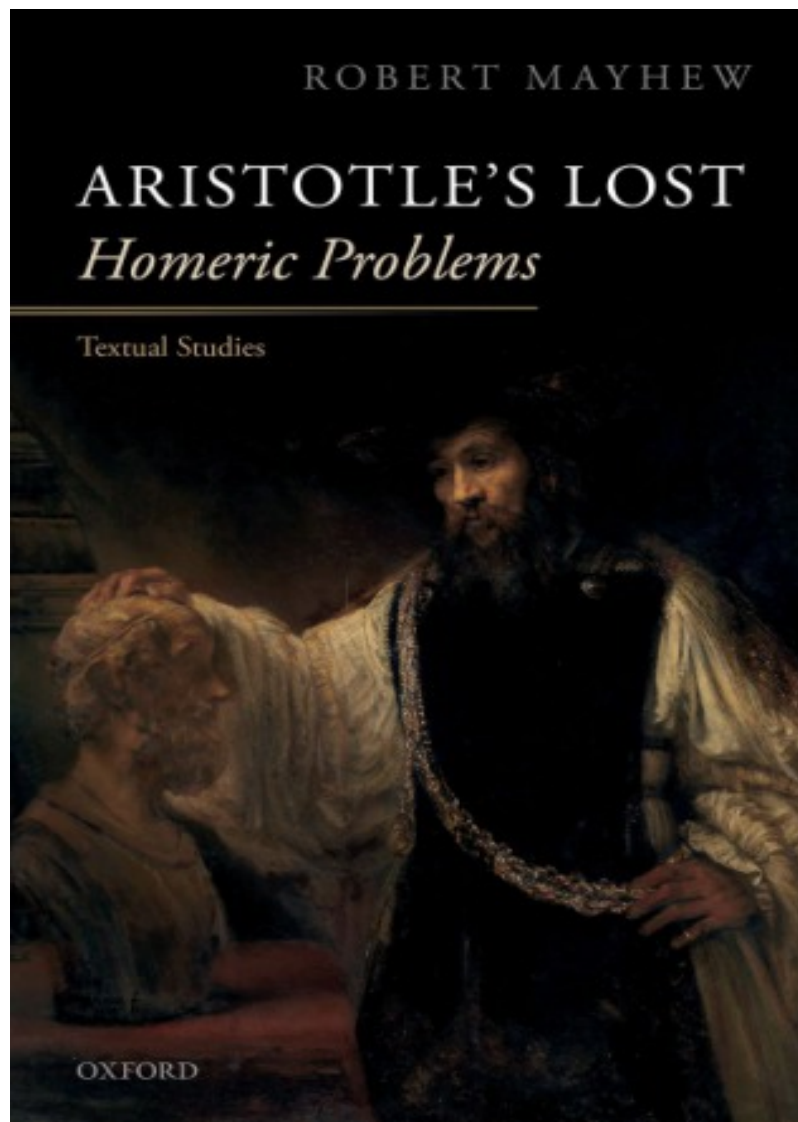


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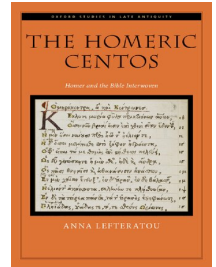


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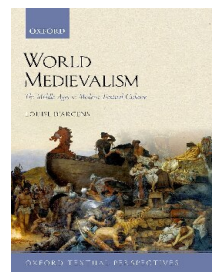
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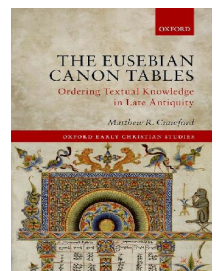
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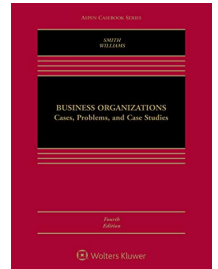
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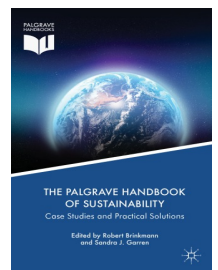
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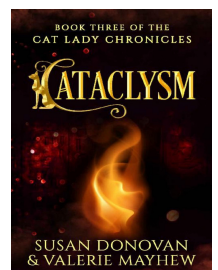
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ROBERT MAYHEW

ARISTOTLE'S LOST *Homeric Problems*

Textual Studies



OXFORD

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

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First Edition published in 2019

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018956451

ISBN 978-0-19-883456-4

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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To Tore Boeckmann

Preface

Aristotle wrote a work, likely entitled Ἀπορήματα or Προβλήματα Ὀμηρικά (which I refer to as *Homeric Problems*),¹ in at least six books, presenting and solving problems related to the epics of Homer.² The two most recent collections of the fragments³ of Aristotle each include nearly forty texts connected to this work (frs. 142–79 Rose/366–404 Gigon).⁴ The vast majority of them are drawn from the numerous scholia in the manuscripts of the Homeric epics⁵—and many of these, in turn, originally come from the *Homeric Questions* of Porphyry (third century AD).⁶

Along with *Poetics* 25 (which I discuss in chapter 1), these texts are clearly our best source for information about the *Homeric Problems*. This material, however, would likely fill, or represents the content of, less than one book; but Aristotle's *Homeric Problems* consisted of multiple books.⁷ Therefore, I think it worthwhile to explore other ways of determining the content of this lost work, beyond *Poetics* 25 and the scholia and other texts gathered together in the standard collections of fragments.⁸

With rare exceptions, the *Homeric Problems* has received little attention. Among the exceptions, I would mention three dissertations

¹ Both ἀπορήματα and προβλήματα can be rendered 'problems' (more on this later). In some earlier publications I referred to this work as *Homeric Puzzles*, but that did not catch on. And it became clear to me from feedback I have received over the past couple of years that it would not. More on the title of this work in chapter 2.

² 'Homer' is shorthand for 'the poet(s) who wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.'

³ It once was a standard practice to distinguish *fragmenta* and *testimonia*. But in most cases (and certainly in dealing with the evidence for Aristotle's lost work on Homer) this is rarely if ever possible. I was therefore tempted to use the somewhat clunky 'source-texts' instead; but in the end, I have opted to use 'fragments' broadly understood to include both what used to be called *fragmenta* and *testimonia*.

⁴ Rose (1886) and Gigon (1987). (NB: The former is the third of the collections of Aristotle's fragments edited by Rose, and so it is often referred to or cited as 'Rose³').

⁵ See the Note on Sources below for the editions of the scholia.

⁶ See the Note on Sources below. Porphyry was aware of the work of a number of Homeric scholars, going at least as far back as the fifth century BC.

⁷ Moreover, one must use the scholia with caution. See Mayhew (2017b).

⁸ I do not mean to imply that these standard collections of fragments are, aside from being incomplete, otherwise reliable. See chapter 3.

(Carroll 1893, Ammendola 1907,⁹ and especially Hintenlang 1961), a small (but growing) number of journal articles,¹⁰ and most recently, Breitenberger's German translation of the fragments, with commentary (2006), and one chapter in Bouchard's *Du Lycée au Musée: théorie poétique et critique littéraire à l'époque hellénistique* (2016, ch. 3). These works, however, though valuable, do not go that far beyond *Poetics* 25 and the standard fragments gathered from the scholia and other sources. I hope that the present set of studies expands our knowledge of the lost *Homeric Problems*, especially by going into terrain for the most part not covered by these earlier works.

The present set of studies on Aristotle's *Homeric Problems* is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with preliminary issues. In chapter 1 ('Pre-Aristotelian Homeric Scholarship and Aristotle's *Poetics* 25'), I set the context for what comes later, first by discussing approaches to the study of Homer, from the presocratics to Plato (with allegorical interpretation receiving special attention), and second by examining *Poetics* 25, which is the longest extant discussion by Aristotle of how to approach the interpretation of Homer, and in particular how to solve Homeric problems. In chapter 2 ('The Titles (and Subtitles) of Aristotle's Lost Work on Homer'), I present the ancient evidence for a work by Aristotle on Homeric problems, and the various titles attributed to it (as well as the number of books it was said to contain, and the possibility of subtitles of its separate books). In chapter 3 ('A Reappraisal of Heitz'), as part of my appeal to scholars not to limit themselves to the fragments in Rose and Gigon when studying the *Homeric Problems*, I argue that Heitz (1869) is a too often overlooked collection of Aristotle's fragments—and in the process examine two neglected texts.

In the next two parts of the book, I pursue two different ways of expanding our knowledge of the *Homeric Problems*. One way is to examine in context quotations from (or allusions to) Homer in Aristotle's extant works. This I do in Part II. I proceed as follows: inquire whether such passages were (likely) the subject of debate or discussion in antiquity; consider whether such debate over or discussion about a particular passage fits Aristotle's aims and methods in his

⁹ I have not been able to find a copy of this University of Naples dissertation.

¹⁰ See Sodano (1964), (1965), (1966), (1974), Huxley (1979), Bouchard (2010) and (2018), Fortenbaugh (2015). To these I would add Mayhew (2016), (2017a), (2017b), and (2017c).

lost *Homeric Problems* (i.e. is there a problem at the heart of the debate or discussion, of the sort with which Aristotle was concerned in *Poetics* 25 and, from what we know from other texts, in the *Homeric Problems*); and finally, does such inquiry and consideration of the Homeric passage in its Aristotelian context give us a hint at—allow us to speculate about—how he might have solved the problem (or alternatively, whether he was critical of Homer). So far as I know, no one has suggested this source. Now I admit that certainty is rarely possible to establish here; rather, one can speak only of attaining degrees of possibility or probability. But I believe I have made some progress. And at the very least, these studies give us a better idea of how Aristotle would have approached some of the debates engaged in by Homeric scholars in antiquity.¹¹ In this part of the book, I consider the evidence from the *History of Animals* (chapter 4), the *Rhetoric* (chapter 5), and *Poetics* 21 (chapter 6).

Part III consists of four studies on select (and in most cases neglected) fragments. I begin (chapter 7, ‘Aristotle on the Meaning of τάλαντον in *Iliad* 23’) with a set of fragments that have not been neglected (in the sense I have been using the term), i.e. they are included in the standard collections of Aristotle’s fragments, and have received some scholarly attention. Nevertheless, I have found that the presentation of this material—in editions of the scholia and in the collections of the fragments of Aristotle—is not always clear or complete, and the discussion of it is not entirely satisfactory. So I take a fresh look at the available evidence, going back to the relevant scholia in the manuscripts themselves. In chapter 8 (‘Aristotle and Aristarchus on the Meaning of κέρας in the *Iliad*’), I examine numerous texts in which Aristotle and/or Aristarchus are said to offer an interpretation on the specific meaning in context of κέρας (‘horn’). I treat the two authors together, because one reason that these Aristotle fragments have been neglected is that earlier scholars have argued that references to Aristotle are in fact, in most cases, mistakes for Aristarchus. I reject this conclusion in almost every instance. The Aristotle fragments, properly identified, provide further evidence for Aristotle’s views on metaphor in Homer. In chapter 9 (‘Aristotle on the Theomachy in *Iliad* 21’), I examine two relatively neglected texts: one from an Oxyrhynchus papyrus containing a commentary on

¹¹ I use the expression ‘Homeric scholar’ quite loosely as shorthand for anyone in antiquity who we know expressed opinions about the Homeric epics.

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Iliad 21, the other from a lengthy scholium in the thirteenth-century Byzantine manuscript *Genavensis* gr. 44. These are important fragments in their own right; but in addition, given that the Theomachy of *Iliad* 21 was an object of allegorical interpretation from the early history of Homeric scholarship, an examination of them offers (at least by implication) insights into whether Aristotle ever engaged in such interpretation. This issue is continued and dealt with more explicitly in the final chapter ('Aristotle's Naturalistic Interpretation of *Odyssey* 12'). The textual evidence for Aristotle's (possible or probable) discussions of three episodes in *Odyssey* 12 are discussed, namely, concerning the Sirens, the ambrosia-bearing doves, and the Cattle of the Sun. All three have historically been treated allegorically. Further, as some contemporary scholars take the fragments on these doves and cattle to be evidence for Aristotle interpreting Homer allegorically, this is an appropriate place to return to the issue of allegorical interpretation in Aristotle—first raised in chapter 1—and as such it serves as an appropriate conclusion to the volume.

I believe these studies confirm and make clearer the close connection between the *Homeric Problems* and *Poetics* 25; provide further examples and a broader range of the kinds of problems Aristotle attempted to solve; and cast doubt on the idea that Aristotle, in solving Homeric problems, sometimes engaged in allegorical interpretation. Most of all, I hope this volume makes clear the need for further work on the lost *Homeric Problems*, and prompts other scholars to undertake that work.

Acknowledgments

I began work on this project during a 2013–14 sabbatical leave: I wish to thank Seton Hall University for granting me that leave, and the Ayn Rand Institute for a research grant that made possible a year-long sabbatical. I also wish to thank Seton Hall for granting me course release during two semesters (Spring 2015 and Spring 2018), as well as a 2016 University Research Council Summer Stipend, all of which contributed to the completion of this project. Many thanks as well to Gregory Nagy, and the personnel at Harvard University's Center for Hellenic Studies (Washington DC), which, during two visits (April 6–12, 2015 and March 6–10, 2017), provided the perfect atmosphere to work on (*inter alia*) the *Homeric Problems*.

It has once again been a pleasure to work with the personnel at Oxford University Press. Special thanks to Charlotte Loveridge for her encouragement and support, to Georgina Leighton for her work on this project in its early stages and to Suryajeet Mullick for seeing it through to completion, and to Kim Richardson for his superb copyediting.

I wish to thank the anonymous referees for the press, for their encouraging words and especially for their critical comments, which prompted me to make many fruitful revisions. Many thanks as well to everyone who commented on individual chapters (or parts thereof) and/or answered various questions connected to my work on this project: Davide Baldi, Elsa Bouchard, Tiziano Dorandi, Dimitri Gutas, Richard Janko, Monte Johnson, Michiel Meeusen, Stephen Menn, Gregory Nagy, Lara Pagani, Ioanna Papadopoulou, Jason Rheins, and David Sider. I would like to single out for special thanks Filippomaria Pontani, who, upon receiving the first of many emails, out of the blue, from an unknown scholar requesting information, responded (that first time, and many times after) with patience and generosity (and more often than not, with highly useful attachments). Of course, none of these scholars should be held responsible for any remaining errors.

For the past thirty years (and counting), my good friend Tore Boeckmann and I have discussed esthetics in general, and Aristotle's *Poetics* in particular (as well as its unappreciated influence on Romantic literature). I dedicate this volume to him.

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List of Abbreviations

Aristotle (Arist.) and the *Corpus Aristotelicum*

Ath. Pol. = *Athenaion Politeia* = *Athenian Constitution*

EE = *Ethica Eudemia* = *Eudemian Ethics*

EN = *Ethica Nicomachea* = *Nicomachean Ethics*

GA = *De generatione animalium* = *On the Generation of Animals*

HA = *Historia animalium* = *History of Animals*

IA = *De inessu animalium* = *On the Progression of Animals*

MA = *De motu animalium* = *On the Movement of Animals*

Metaph. = *Metaphysica* = *Metaphysics*

Mete. = *Meteorologica* = *Meteorology*

Mir. = *De mirabilibus auscultationibus* = *On Marvelous Things Heard*

PA = *De partibus animalium* = *On the Parts of Animals*

Phys. = *Physica* = *Physics*

Poet. = *Poetica* = *Poetics*

Pol. = *Politica* = *Politics*

Rhet. = *Rhetorica* = *Rhetoric*

Soph. El. = *Sophistici Elenchi* = *Sophistical Refutations*

Top. = *Topica* = *Topics*

For other ancient authors and works, I have used the abbreviations in LSJ and/or OCD³ (though see p. xxii note 18 for Porphyry's *Homeric Questions*).¹

Abbreviations of Modern Works

BDAG F. Montanari et al., *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. Leiden, 2015

CAG *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*. Berlin

DK H. Diels and W. Kranz, eds., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. Berlin, 1952

FGrHist F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin, 1923–99

¹ With few exceptions, my practice is to use English titles of Greek works. In the case of the essays in Plutarch's *Moralia*, I use the English titles listed in Lamberton (2001, 199–210) but standard abbreviations based on the Latin titles.

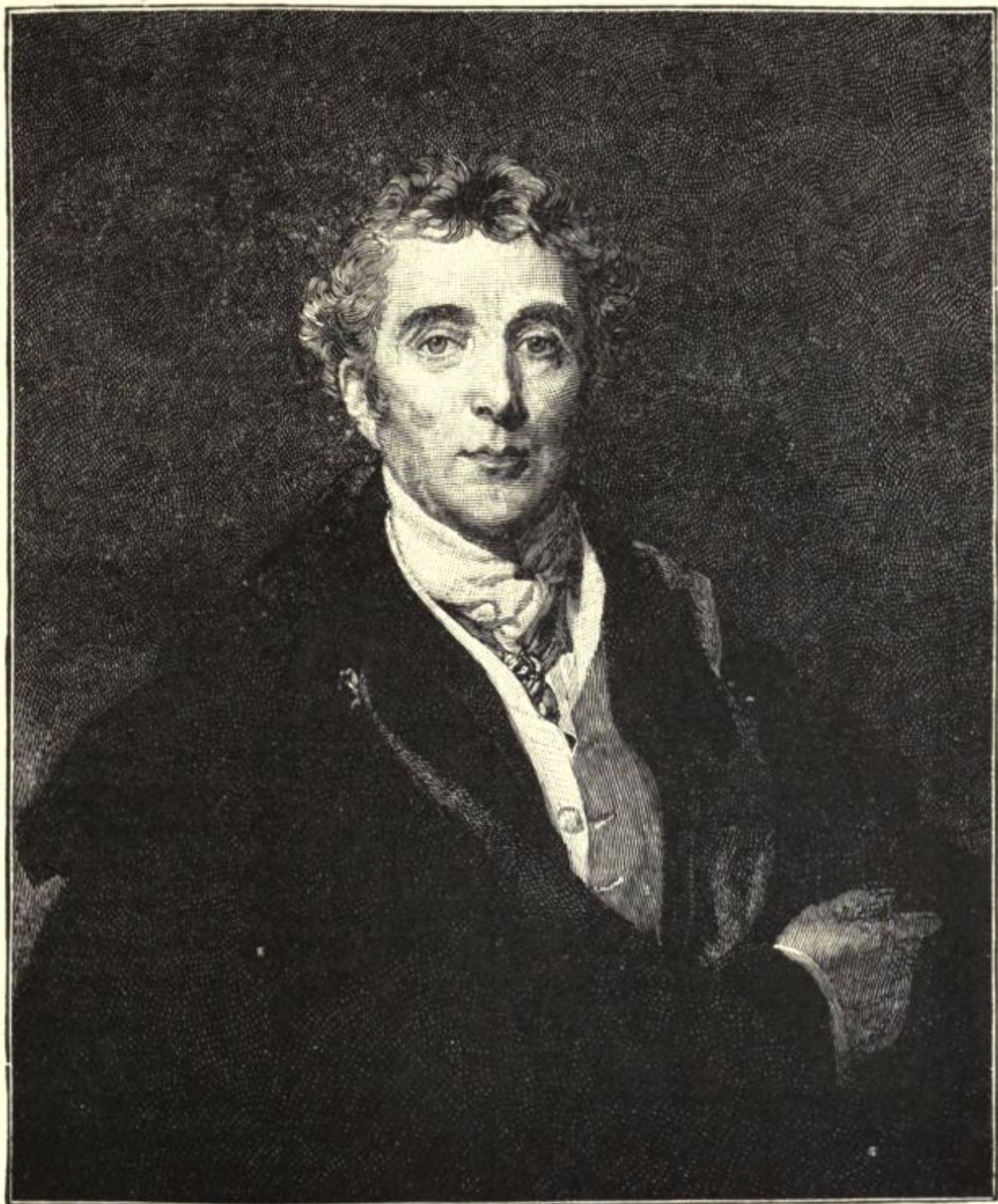
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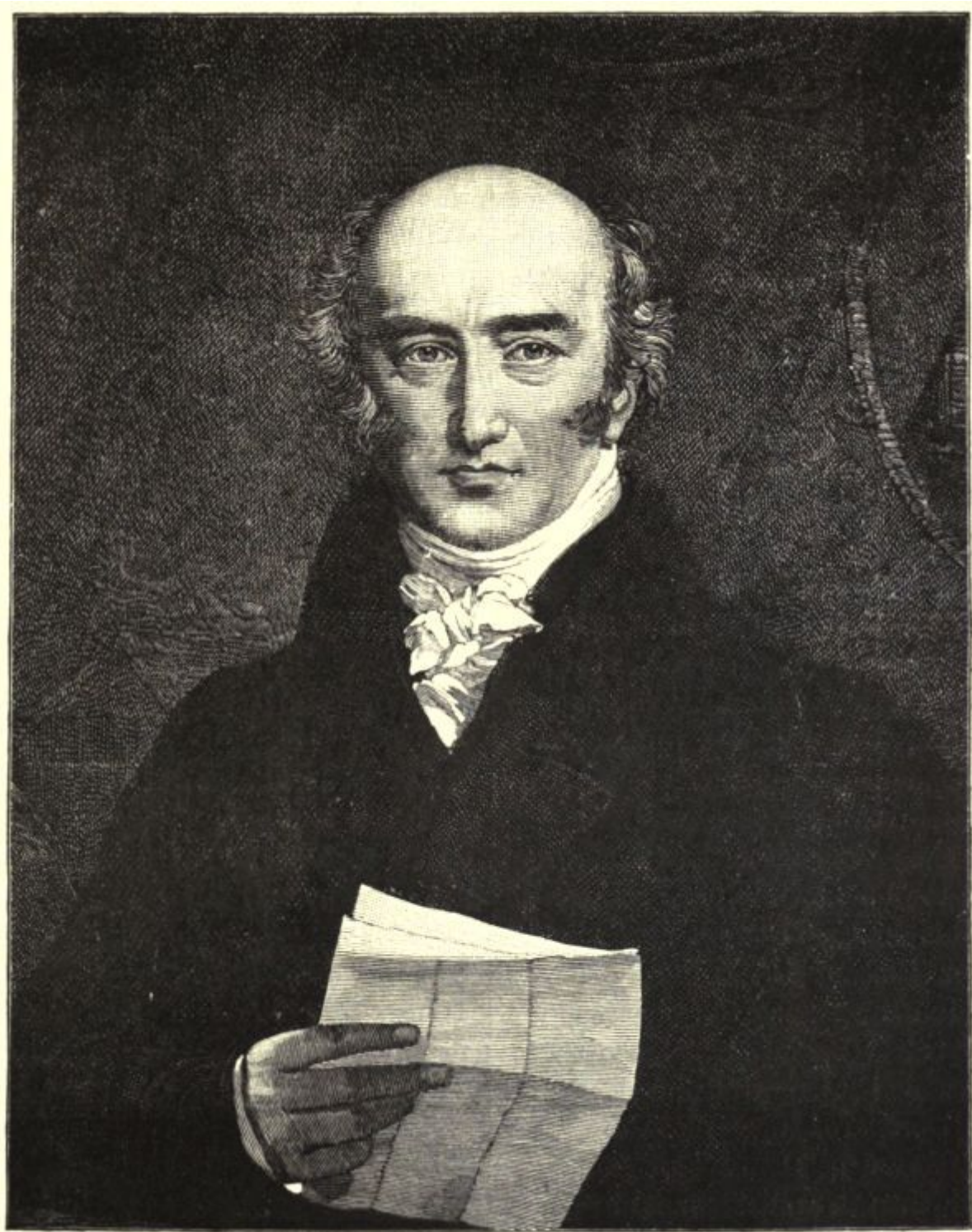
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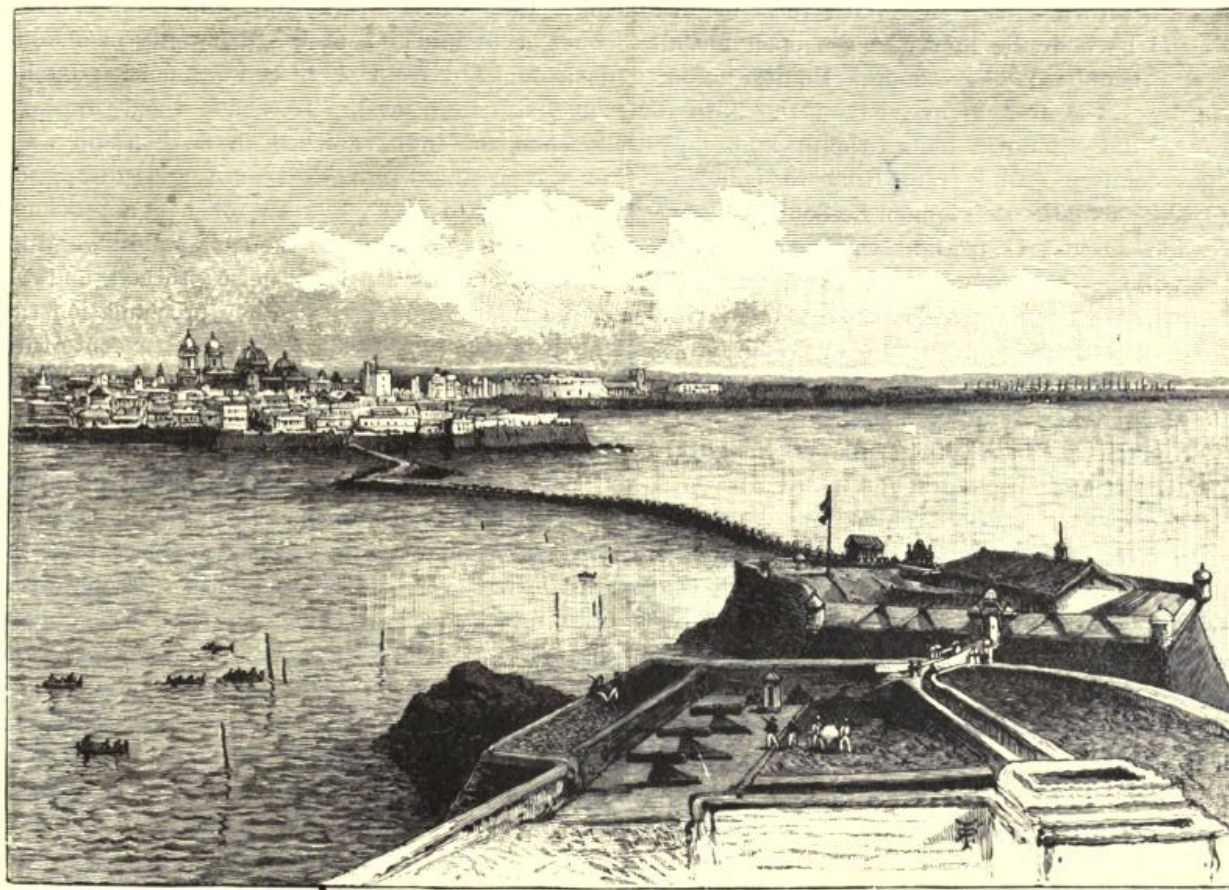
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